

Dear Oregon legislators,

My name is Felipe Villalba and I was recently released after serving eight years in prison. Family members were able to visit me in person once in a while, but the main way we stayed in touch was through the phone. Phone calls made me feel a mixture of sadness and relief. Ultimately, it was incredibly important for my mental health to stay in contact with my family. If we hadn't been able to talk, I would have felt more stressed and had a more difficult time completing my sentence. It was also equally important to them to hear my voice and know that I was doing okay. Now that I am out, spending time with them in person and joining them for the holidays, I am so glad we remained close throughout those years.

Thankfully, my family was able to afford our calls. I could not afford them myself, as I had to put my entire paycheck towards necessities from the commissary. I personally saw a lot of people in prison who couldn't afford to speak with their families. The stress they felt was visible. I believe phone calls should be free because no one should have to struggle to choose between purchasing necessities and staying in contact with their family.

Sincerely,

Felipe Villalba  
Medford, OR